

COVID-19 Vaccination FAQs for Employers (Non-Healthcare Settings)

Common questions (and answers) about COVID-19 vaccination from employers in workplace settings:

1. Can employers require COVID-19 vaccines for their workforce?

POSSIBLY. The COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the US are authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). The FDA and the Federal government do **NOT** mandate vaccination.

State or local governments, or employers, may decide to require or mandate COVID-19 vaccination based on state or other applicable laws.

In Washington, there is not currently a state law related to COVID-19 vaccination. However, other Federal laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Civil Rights Act, and the Fair Labor Standards Act may have a bearing on employer's decisions around mandating worker vaccination.

For more information, please visit:

[Washington DOH COVID-19 Resources and Recommendations for Employers](#)

[CDC Workplace Vaccination Program guidance, section on Vaccine Mandates & Exemptions](#)

2. Do workers have to test negative for COVID-19 before they get a COVID vaccine?

NO. A negative COVID-19 test is NOT required for vaccination with ANY COVID-19 vaccine. However, symptom screenings should be conducted before anyone receives a COVID-19 vaccine, and people who have a fever or other COVID-19 symptoms should be advised to seek COVID-19 testing and then isolate at home. The sick worker can get vaccinated after:

- A. Their symptoms have resolved or
- B. They received a positive test result, completed their COVID-19 isolation period, and their symptoms have resolved. Any worker who has severe COVID-19 or injectable or intravenous medications for COVID-19 (such as monoclonal antibodies) should

check with their health care provider before receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, because certain treatments for severe COVID-19 may require a longer waiting period before getting a vaccine.

3. Some of my employees have already had COVID-19. Do they still need to get vaccinated?

YES. Workers should be vaccinated regardless of whether they have already had COVID-19. That's because experts do not yet know how long people are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. Even if a worker has already recovered from COVID-19, it is possible—although rare—that they could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 again. Learn more about [why getting vaccinated is a safer way to build protection](#) than getting infected.

4. Can we ease workplace restrictions like masking and distancing after employees are vaccinated?

NOT YET. In work settings, even after employees receive a COVID-19 vaccine, they may still need to take steps to [protect themselves and others](#) in many situations. Employers should continue to follow the [Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to COVID-19](#). This includes wearing well-fitting masks, making sure employees are staying at least 6 feet apart from each other, avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces, and washing hands often. The more contact the employees have with one another (or members of the public they may interact with at work), the more likely they are to be exposed to COVID-19.

Workplace health and safety measures, such as barriers to separate workers, changes in employee movement at the work site, staggering of worker shifts, or other protective measures were started, they need to remain in place for now.

In addition, workplace symptom screening for employees should still continue, and if any workers present to work with fever or other symptoms of COVID-19, they should be sent home from work and advised to seek testing for COVID-19.

For more information, visit the CDC [Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to COVID-19](#) and the Washington DOH [Checklist for Businesses with Suspected or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19](#).

5. Can COVID-19 outbreaks still occur in at work even if all employees are vaccinated?

YES. It is possible that outbreaks in the workplace could still happen, even if all workers are vaccinated against COVID-19. Employers should continue symptom screening for all workers, and send workers home from work if they have fever or other COVID-19 symptoms.

If a workplace has a regular testing program to screen for COVID-19 in workers, employers should continue screening testing.

- If an employer is notified of one or more cases of COVID-19 in workers, they should continue to follow established outbreak protocols. If two or more employees test positive for COVID-19 in a 14 day period, employers should notify their Local Health Jurisdiction ([Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)) of a possible COVID-19 outbreak.

For more information about investigating outbreaks of COVID-19 in the workplace, please see the following resources from Washington DOH:

[Guidance for Daily COVID-19 Symptom Screening of Staff and Guests](#)

[Checklist for Businesses with Suspected or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19](#)

6. Our workplace would like to help our employees get COVID-19 vaccines. What can we do?

There are lots of things that employers can do to encourage and support employee vaccination. These include:

- Talking to workers about COVID-19 vaccines and providing information to build employee confidence about getting vaccinated. ([Fact sheets, materials, and flyers in multiple languages](#))
- Let workers know when they are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination in Washington. The latest information about COVID-19 eligibility is available here: [Washington DOH COVID-19 Phase Finder](#).
- Allow workers time off to attend off-site vaccination clinics, many of which are scheduled during daytime working hours.
- Consider providing incentives for workers who get vaccinated.
- Arranging workplace vaccination clinics on-site.

For more information and resources from the CDC about workplace vaccination programs, [visit their website](#).

7. What should employers know about post-vaccination side effects?

After getting vaccinated, it is expected that people might have some side effects, which are normal and a sign that the body is building protection against COVID-19. Common side effects are pain, redness, and swelling in the arm where they received the shot, as well as tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, and nausea. These side effects could affect worker's ability to do work-related activities, especially if those activities are strenuous or require manual labor. These side effects should go away in a few days. Learn more about [what to expect after getting a COVID-19 vaccine](#).

Employers are encouraged to adopt flexible leave policies for their workers, to allow workers time off if they are experiencing post-vaccination symptoms.

For more information, please visit the [CDC resources](#).

8. What should I do if I have more vaccine-specific questions?

For additional questions related to COVID-19 vaccination and your workforce, **CONTACT DOH** at atvaccine.engagement@doh.wa.gov.

This guidance may be updated periodically as new information becomes available.

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Specific Resources:

Washington State requirements for specific work settings during COVID-19:

[WA Labor and Industry Agriculture Proclamation](#)

[Temporary Housing Emergency Rule](#)

[Workplace specific guidance from Washington LNI](#) (many settings, including Agriculture, Health care, Firefighting, School and Childcare, Construction, Firefighting, etc)

COVID-19 Public Health Guidance from Washington DOH:

[Information for Businesses and Workers](#)

[Farm and Agriculture Guidance](#)

[Seafood Industry Guidance](#)

[Resources and Recommendation](#)

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share only accurate information to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)

- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions? Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: **1-800-525-0127**

Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and [observed state holidays](#), 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.